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OPEN-DOOR COLLEGE OR OPEN-DOOR CURRICULUMS.

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THE "OPEN DOOR" OR UNRESTRICTED ADMISSION POLICY OF MOST JUNIOR COLLEGES IS TOO FREQUENTLY EXTENDED TO THE BELIEF THAT THE STUDENT SHOULD HAVE UNRESTRICTED CHOICE OF PROGRAM. THUS STUDENTS OFTEN ENROLL IN PROGRAMS AND WORK TOWARD EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR WHICH THEY ARE UNQUALIFIED. THE "SALVAGE" FUNCTION OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE DEMANDS SELECTIVE PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN PROGRAMS AND CURRICULUMS CONGRUENT WITH THEIR ABILITIES AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND. THE STUDENT MUST BE HELPED TO FACE THE REALITY OF HIS SITUATION, AND THE COLLEGE HAS A MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY IN HELPING HIM TO ASSESS HIS QUALIFICATIONS AT ENTRANCE TO THE COLLEGE. A RELATED FUNCTION OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE IS ARTICULATION WITH HIGH SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PROVISION OF INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATES OF TERMINAL PROGRAMS. AN OBLIGATION OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE IS PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN PROGRAMS IN WHICH THEY HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING AND TO HELP STUDENTS OUT OF PROGRAMS IN WHICH THEY WILL PROBABLY FAIL. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 38, NUMBER 5, FEBRUARY 1968. (WO)

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OPEN-DOOR COLLEGE OR OPEN-DOOR CURRICULUMS?

A Plea for Selective Placement

By John E. Roueche and David M. Sims

For the past two decades, the community junior college has been called "democracy's college." Junior colleges stress that institutional goals are closely tied to the principle that each individual should have the opportunity to progress as far as his interests and abilities will permit. It has been emphasized that anyone who can profit from a college education should have a chance to acquire it. While this concept does not imply that everyone should have the same education, it does demand diversified education and a commitment to the "open-door" concept for admission to the junior college. As Burton Clark emphasized in his book, *The Open-Door College*, "The open-door outlook is generally extended in junior colleges to the belief that the incoming student should also have unrestricted choice in selecting a field of study."

One of the first programs offered in a new junior college is the traditional college transfer curriculum. Most students entering the junior college indicate a preference for the college transfer program. Two-thirds to three-fourths of the students who enter our junior colleges announce that they intend to transfer to senior institutions although, in actuality, fewer than one-third continue their formal education beyond junior college graduation. Yet, many college administrators feel they cannot deny access to the transfer curriculum, regardless of the college potential of the student. An unobstructed choice of program has become a part of the "open-door" policy.

In junior colleges there now exists the ludicrous situation of students enrolling in programs and working toward educational goals for which they are unqualified. These students make heavy demands upon their instructors and impede the progress of their fellow students. Often these same students are qualified for other programs offered in the same college.

At a recent educational conference, a junior college president stressed that the right to fail is a student's right in a democracy. On the other hand, in a speech to the Student Services Personnel Association of North Carolina, Raymond Schultz, of Florida State University, stressed that "the cliche that a student is entitled to the 'right to fail' smacks of professional irresponsibility. As professionals, our judgment must be better than the student's or we had better fold up our tent and quietly slip away." The high attrition rate in junior college transfer programs has led critics to label the "open door" as merely the "revolving door."

Salvaging Institution

It is often argued that the junior college is a "salvaging" institution. By law, this function has been assigned to the junior college since, in most states, it must admit all high school graduates and adults who seek admission. Regardless of the student's declared educational goals, this legal responsibility is an awesome burden on the junior college. It demands a diversity of educational offerings to facilitate the diversity of talents and abilities of those students entering the junior college. Most important, it demands "selective placement" of students in programs and curriculums that are congruent with their talents and educational backgrounds. It must be emphasized that selective placement is an empty term unless the junior college can offer the needed range of curricular offerings. Diverse educational offerings are a prerequisite to any selective placement procedure.

In *The Open-Door College*, Burton Clark identified what he labels as the "cooling out" function of the junior college, a term he borrowed from gambling or, more accurately, the confidence game. The confidence man, having fleeced a victim, must occasionally face the responsibility of allowing the victim to examine the reality of his situation. Clark uses this term to suggest that the junior college has somewhat the same responsibility to its students—a responsibility to assist them in facing the reality of the situation in which they often find themselves.

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It is true that in the junior college a student does not definitely fail but rather may simply transfer to a terminal program more commensurate with his abilities and talents. The "cooling out" function will always have a place in the junior college as students redefine their educational objectives and reassess their individual abilities. This function, however, could be greatly diminished in scope if only the junior college would assume the *major* role in assessing at the beginning of their educational experience the appropriate qualifications of students to enter certain programs and courses.

Awareness of Opportunities

Some students come to the junior college with lofty ambitions, planning to enter engineering, medicine, or law—fields for which many are unqualified. This program is not peculiar to the junior college. It is, instead, indicative of the society in which we live. Parents, high school teachers, and counselors think of college in terms of a four-year program leading directly to the baccalaureate degree. Status and prestige are intangible by-products of a college degree; and parents, teachers, and counselors do not generally think in terms of programs not leading to the A.B. degree. The junior college has an obligation both to students who have made unrealistic career choices and to their parents and teachers.

The junior college must bring parents, teachers, and counselors to an awareness of the expanding opportunities in the nontransfer areas. The high school sends students to the junior college with whatever goals and aspirations they might have. The junior college must be concerned with articulation but not entirely with the four-year institutions. Junior colleges have been working toward improved articulation with senior institutions for more than thirty years but the *real* need for articulation is with the high schools which furnish students to the junior college. The junior college must assume the leadership in such articulation. Principals, teachers, and counselors need to be brought to the junior college campus. Technical and vocational programs, and the opportunities available to graduates of these programs, need to be presented.

At a recent high school articulation conference at Gaston College, high school teachers were amazed to learn that the average starting salary for graduates of the technical program was above $500 a month. High school counselors are now telling students about the opportunities available in electrical engineering technology—a field in which every graduate has numerous job offers.

Parents, too, are surprised to learn of the excellent opportunities available to graduates of occupational programs. Parental support is usually forthcoming when programs are explained in terms of economic supply and demand. This support, however, is not available unless the junior college takes the lead in explaining program offerings and opportunities. Since two-thirds of all junior college students do not transfer to senior institutions, the junior college must give emphasis to better articulation with high schools and the parents of prospective students.

With proper support from parents and high school personnel, the junior college can assume *major* responsibility for decisions both for what constitutes a realistic educational goal for the individual student and for getting the student to accept such a goal.

For those students with ability to enter either the college transfer program or the sophisticated engineering technician program, but with certain subject deficiencies, the idea of completing junior college in two years must be altered. A fetish has been developed over the "two-year" college. It may take some students three years or more to complete certain programs. With the heterogeneity found in a typical junior college, all students are not equally equipped to complete programs in the same length of time.

Remedial or developmental courses can be offered during the summer prior to the beginning of the fall term. Students can be persuaded to make up their educational deficiencies during the summer period if they are determined to complete junior college in two years. There are many possibilities in the scheduling of classes but time should not be a factor when the student's best interests are at stake.

Mortality Rate Too High

There is nothing wrong with the concept of the "open door." In a democracy, the goal is to educate each citizen to the highest level of his potential. Education is now a matter of national necessity. Individual resources are the nation's greatest reservoir in the continuing process of national development. This is not the issue. By law, junior colleges must admit high school graduates and adults but this does not imply that all students should be admitted to all programs. The junior college has an obligation to place students in programs in which the student has a good chance of succeeding and, conversely, to keep students out of programs in which they will probably fail.

The present mortality rate in college parallel programs is too high. The basis for admission to programs in a junior college is a professional decision that should be determined for each student by utilizing the best information available to educators.

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